

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 MCT-01 CAB-02 DODE-00
DOTE-00 FAA-00 L-03 TRSE-00 PM-05 H-01 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /080 W
-----062401 281427Z /46

R 280840Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6782
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 1619

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, EAIR, PINT, PGOV, AF
SUBJECT: LAST YEAR'S MURDER OF ARIANA PILOT GRAN REMAINS
UNRESOLVED AND PUBLICLY UNREPORTED

REF: (A) 77 KABUL 6686 (B) 77 KABUL 6473

1. SUMMARY. FIVE MONTHS AFTER THE EVENT, THE MURDER LAST FALL OF ARIANA PILOT INA'MUL HAQ GRAN REMAINS UNSOLVED -- AND HAS NOT BEEN PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT (GOA). CERTAIN GOA OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY DISMISSED THE MATTER AS A "NORMAL" MURDER RESULTING FROM A FAMILY FEUD. HOWEVER, MANY OTHER AFGHAN AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS, INCLUDING MOST ARIANA PILOTS, HAVE (EVEN MORE PRIVATELY) TRIED AND CONVICTED THE REGIME ITSELF AS THE GUILTY PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE STILL UNSOLVED MURDER OF ARIANA PILOT GRAN LAST SEPTEMBER 13 REMAINS, AS FAR AS THE GOA IS CONCERNED, A NON-EVENT WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN REPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA. EVEN THOUGH THE REGIME DOES NOT NORMALLY REPORT CRIMES UNTIL THE GUILTY PARTIES CAN BE FORMALLY ACCUSED AND, SOMETIMES, DISPLAYED, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS SENSITIVITY OF THE GRAN CASE, AND THE PREDICTABLE CONCLUSION WHICH OBSERVERS WOULD REACH IN THE FACE OF OFFICIAL SILENCE, PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE PROMPTED A MORE REVEALING PUBLIC STANCE ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT. CONTINUED GOA REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS EVENT HAS, IN MANY MINDS, CONSTITUTED THE MOST DAMAGING "EVIDENCE" AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES. THOSE AFGHAN OFFICIALS WHO WILL RESPOND TO DIRECT PRIVATE

QUERIES TAKE THE TACK THAT THE KILLING WAS "JUST ANOTHER CRIME," PROBABLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO SOME SORT OF FAMILY FEUD. THIS OFFICIAL ATTITUDE HAS HAD A DAMPENING EFFECT ON THE NORMALLY VOLUBLE KABUL BAZAAR RUMOR MILL, BECAUSE SINCE SHORTLY AFTER THE MURDER THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE MENTION OF THE EVENT, OR SPECULATION REGARDING THE GUILTY PARTIES.

3. AFGHANS WHO HAVE BEEN MORE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY, OR INVOLVED IN, THE AFFAIR (SUCH AS GRAN'S FAMILY AND MOST OF THE ARIANA PILOTS) HAVE TRIED AND CONVICTED THE REGIME OF CULPABILITY, AND HAVE SPECIFICALLY LAID RESPONSIBILITY AT THE DOORSTEPS OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE GENERAL GHULAM HAIDER RASSULI (THE FATHER-IN-LAW OF ARIANA PRESIDENT AMINULLAH NAJIB), NAJIB HIMSELF, MINISTER OF INTERIOR ABDUL QADIR (NURISTANI), AND, SOMETIMES, THE "HEAD OF THE COUNTRY." ONE RECENT STORY HELD THAT AN UNDERWORLD FIGURE NAMED GHULAM HAZARAT WAS ASSIGNED BY RASSULI AND QADIR TO KILL GRAN, BUT THAT AFTER CARRYING OUT THAT DEED, HAZARAT DECLINED SUBSEQUENT ORDERS TO KILL ANOTHER RASULLI/ QADIR TARGET. THEREFORE, HAZARAT HAS, ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, SINCE BEEN ARRESTED AND PERHAPS ELIMINATED. ANOTHER VERSION OF THE GRAN INCIDENT CONTENTS THAT THE KILLERS WERE FROM THE ARMY'S 72ND REGIMENT, COMMANDED BY A COLONEL WALI, BUT THEIR ORDERS OSTENSIBLY CAME DIRECTLY FROM RASSULI.

4. AS A RESULT OF THE GRAN MURDER AND THE APPARENTLY CYNICAL GOA ATTITUDE TOWARD IT, THE ARIANA PILOTS, SOME OF WHOM STILL CONFIDENTIAL

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HARBOR A NUMBER OF LABOR GRIEVANCES, ARE REPORTEDLY VERY WARY OF UNDERTAKING ANY STRIKE SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH MAY HAVE LED TO GRAN'S DEATH. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE PILOTS AND OTHER ARIANA EMPLOYEES ARE CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN A POTENTIALLY RISKY LABOR "SLOWDOWN" AIMED AT OBTAINING THE PAY INCREASES WHICH WERE THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF LABOR NEGOTIATIONS DURING LAST FALL'S STRIKE. FINALLY, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PILOTS WHO ARE SO DISENCHANTED THAT THEY ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING TO LEAVET DDCOUNTRY PERMANENTLY, BUT NONE HAS THUS FAR BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUCH A MAJOR PERSONAL MOVE.

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5. COMMENT: WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL NEVER ANNOUNCE THE CAPTURE AND PROSECUTION OF GRAN'S KILLERS, AND THAT THEY WILL INSTEAD ADHERE TO THE OSTRICH-LIKE POSTURE THEY HAVE STRUCK SO FAR, SIMPLY BECAUSE THE UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR STEMMING FROM THE MURDER SERVES THE GOA'S INTERESTS IN COWING ANY DISSENT GROUP, LABOR, OR OTHERWISE, WHICH MIGHT IN THE FUTURE FEEL SUFFICIENTLY BRAVE TO PRECIPITATE A SHOWDOWN WITH THE REGIME. IN THE NEARER TERM, ANY INITIAL EXODUS OF A FEW ARIANA PILOTS WOULD PROBABLY PROMPT A GOVERNMENT COUNTER-EFFORT DIRECTED AT PREVENTING FURTHER SUCH DEPARTURES, THUS GUARANTEEING THAT ARIANA WOULD RETAIN A POOL OF TRAINED, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY DISCONTENTED, FLIERS.

6. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE NO REASON TO MODIFY OUR VIEWS CONTAINED IN REFTEL A THAT THE MURDER LIKELY WAS PETRATED BY SOME SEGMENT OF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, WE REMAIN RELUCTANT TO ACCUSE ANY SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL, ESPECIALLY IN THE ABSENCE OF HARDER EVIDENCE THAN HAS APPEARED HERETOFORE. SHOULD SUCH EVIDENCE BE FORTHCOMING, THE POLITICAL FALL-OUT COULD BE CONSIDERABLE, AND IT COULD, AS WELL, SERIOUSLY CALL INTO QUESTION THIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEES
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CONTAINED IN THE COUNTRY'S CONSTITUTION.
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